- Not to charge penal interest in respect of current dues in default.

As a special dispensation for the agriculture sector, the Government of India has advised all the public sector banks to reduce their lending rate for agriculture to a single digit rate of not more than 9% per annum on crop loans up to a ceiling of Rs. 50,000/-. Keeping in view the importance of flow of credit to agriculture, in particular to the smaller borrowers who may not have the necessary assets as collateral, the banks have been advised to waive margin/security requirements for agricultural loans upto Rs. 50,000/-. NABARD has also issued guidelines on schemes for Redemption of Debts of farmers from non-institutional sources.

Deputing farmers for cultivating abroad

†198. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:
DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that farmers of the country are being deputed to certain countries of the world for cultivation;

(b) if so, the facts in this regard; and

(c) the steps taken by Government for protecting the interests of the farmers deputed in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) to (c) Central Government (Ministry of Agriculture) have not permitted deputing of farmers to foreign countries. Further information is, however, being collected from the State Governments.

Assistance to drought affected States

†199. SHRI AJAY SINGH CHAUTALA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of drought ridden States during 2002-03 and 2003-04;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) loss of life and property in each State caused as a result thereof;

(c) the quantum of financial assistance asked for by the each affected States and the same actually provided to them; and

(d) the reasons for not providing the assistance as per the demand and whether the remaining assistance is likely to be provided in near future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) to (d) No loss of life or property has been reported on account of droughts in the year 2002-03 and 2003-04.

The details of the drought affected States, the assistance demanded by them from the National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF) and assistance sanctioned in accordance with the prescribed norms after adjusting balances in the relief funds of these States for the relevant year are as under:

(Rs. in crores)

Sl. No.	State	Drought of 2002-03			Drought of 2003-04		
		No. of Districts declared as drought affected	Demand from NCCF	Release from NCCF	No. of Districts declared as drought affected	Demand from NCCF	Release from NCCF (so far)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Andhra Pradesh	22	1860.00	123.51	21	859.88	50.58
2.	Chhattisgarh	16	880.66	127.51	—	—	—
3.	Gujarat	14	895.34	—	—	—	—
4.	Haryana	19	1895.98	—	—	—	—
5.	Himachal Pradesh	12	155.86	14.35	—	—	—
6.	Jammu & Kashmir	#	1623.98	—	—	—	—
7.	Jharkhand	22	1467.25	—	15	—	—
8.	Karnataka	24	1562.85	207.65	25	1881.55	298.16
9.	Kerala	11	1035.07	—	14	1359.03	—

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
10.	Madhya Pradesh	33	819.62	171.66	—	—	—
11.	Maharashtra	33	1730.61	20.00	11	1715.00	250.69
12.	Orissa	30	871.40	5.29	—	—	—
13.	Punjab	17	3529.44	—	—	—	—
14.	Rajasthan	32	7519.76	889.61	3	—	—
15.	Tamil Nadu	28	1545.76	332.09	29	2283.73	173.35
16.	Uttaranchal	13	401.81	—	8	411.87	—
17.	Uttar Pradesh	70	7539.79	310.06	—	—	—

State Government of Jammu and Kashmir did not formally declare the drought affected areas.

Besides, foodgrains allocations of 87.87 lakh MTs (valued approximately at Rs. 8787 crores) for 2002-03 and 26.37 lakh MTs (valued approximately at Rs. 2637 crores) were also made for 2003-04.

The variation between amounts demanded and amounts sanctioned were on account of the fact that many of the items for which assistance was demanded were not covered under the norms. These included meeting of material costs in employment generation, losses sustained by the power sector and input subsidy for area left unsown (for 2003-04) etc. No complaint of paucity of funds was received after completion of relief operations in these years.

Illegal trade in orchid industry

200. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of growing trade of orchids smuggled into India from Thailand thereby posing a threat to nascent orchid industry in the North Eastern States;

(b) whether this illegal trade is facilitated by India's plant quarantine norms which are not stringent; and

(c) what measures are being taken to protect the domestic orchid industry through prevention of illegal entry of inferior orchids from Thailand?